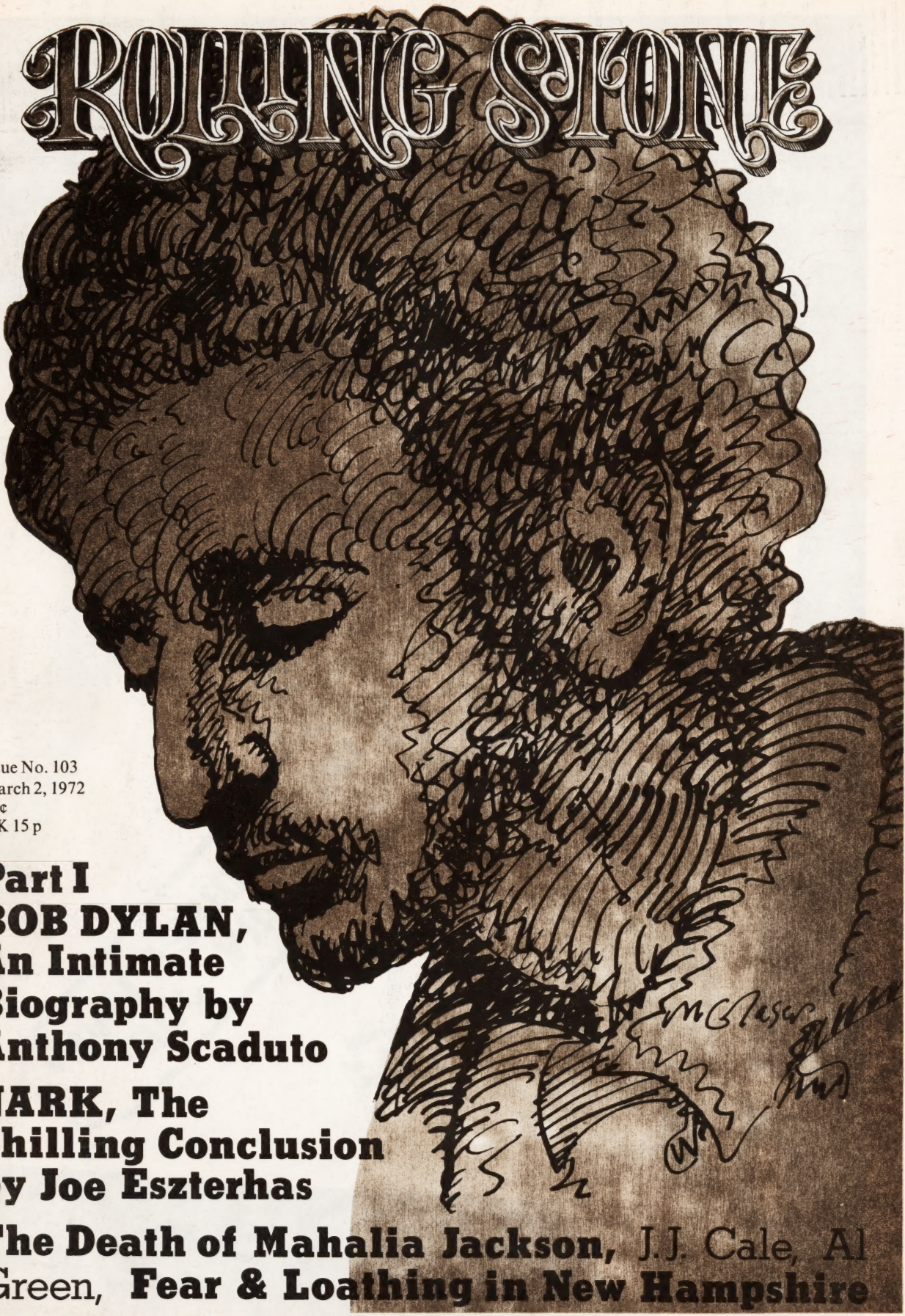


ROLLING STONE



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It was just before midnight when I left Cambridge and headed north on U.S. 93 toward Manchester—driving one of those big green rented Auto/Stick Cougars that gets rubber for about 29 seconds in Drive, and spits hot black divots all over the road in First or Second . . . a terrible screeching and fishtailing through the outskirts of Boston heading north to New Hampshire, back on the Campaign Trail . . . running late, as usual: left hand on the wheel and the other on the radio dial, seeking music, and a glass of iced wild turkey spilling into my crotch on every turn.

Not much of a moon tonight, but a sky full of very bright stars. Freezing cold outside; patches of ice on the road and snow on the sidehills . . . running about 75 or 80 through a landscape of stark naked trees and stone fences; not many cars out tonight, and no lights in the roadside farmhouses. People go to bed early in New England.

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Four years ago I ran this road in a different Mercury, but I wasn't driving then. It was a big yellow sedan with a civvy-clothes cop at the wheel. Sitting next to the cop, up front, were two of Nixon's best speechwriters: Ray Price and Pat Buchanan.

There were only two of us in back: just me and Richard Nixon, and we were talking football in a very serious way. It was late—almost midnight then, too—and the cop was holding the big Merc at exactly 65 as we hissed along the highway for more than an hour between some American Legion hall in a small town near Nashua where Nixon had just made a speech, to the airport up in Manchester where a Lear Jet was waiting to whisk the candidate and his braintrust off to Key Biscayne for a Think Session.

It was a very weird trip; probably one of the weirdest things I've ever done and especially weird because both Nixon and I enjoyed it. We had a good talk, and when we got to the airport, I stood around the Lear Jet with Dick and the others, chatting in a very relaxed way about how successful his swing through New Hampshire had been . . . and as he climbed into the plane it seemed only natural to thank him for the ride and shake hands.

But suddenly I was seized from behind and jerked away from the plane. Good God, I thought as I reeled backwards, Here we Go . . . "Watch Out!" somebody was shouting. "Get the cigarette!" A hand lashed out of the darkness to snatch the cigarette out of my mouth, then other hands kept me from falling and I recognized the voice of Nick Ruwe, Nixon's chief advance man for New Hampshire, saying, "God damnit, Hunter, you almost blew up the plane!"

I shrugged. He was right. I'd been leaning over the fuel tank with a burning butt in my mouth. Nixon smiled and reached out to shake hands again, while Ruwe muttered darkly and the others stared down at the asphalt.

The plane took off and I rode back to the Holiday Inn with Nick Ruwe. We laughed about the cigarette scare, but he was still brooding. "What worries me," he said, "is that nobody else noticed it. Christ, those guys get paid to protect the Boss . . ."

"Very bad show," I said, "especially when you remember that I did about three king-size Marlboros while we were standing there. Hell, I was flicking the butts away, lighting new ones . . . you people are lucky I'm a sane, responsible journalist; otherwise I might have hurled my flaming Zippo into the fuel tank."

"Not you," he said. "Egomaniacs don't do that kind of thing." He smiled. "You wouldn't do anything you couldn't live to write about, would you?"

"You're probably right," I said. "Kamikaze is not my style. I much prefer subtleties, the low-key approach—because I am, after all, a professional."

"We know. That's why you're along."

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Actually, the reason was very different: I was the only one in the press corps, that evening, who claimed to be as seriously addicted to pro football as Nixon himself. I was also the only out-front, openly hostile Peace Freak; the only one wearing old Levis and a ski jacket, the only one (no, there was one other) who'd smoked grass on Nixon's big Greyhound press bus, and certainly the only one who habitually referred to the candidate as "the Dingbat."

So I still had to credit the bastard for having the balls to choose me—out of the 15 or 20 straight/heavy press types who'd been pleading for two or

three weeks for even a five-minute interview—as the one who should share the back seat with him on this Final Ride through New Hampshire.

But there was, of course, a catch. I had to agree to talk about *nothing except football*. "We want the boss to relax," Ray Price told me, "but he can't relax if you start yelling about Vietnam, race riots or drugs. He wants to ride with

Our President and there was no real hint, in the winter of '68, that he was about to cash his check. Johnson seemed every bit as tough and invulnerable then as Nixon seems today . . . and it is slightly unnerving to recall that Richard Nixon, at that point in his campaign, appeared to have about as much chance of getting himself elected to the White House as Hubert Humphrey appears to have to-

Fear and Loathing in New Hampshire

by Hunter S. Thompson



GEORGE?

somebody who can talk football." He cast a baleful eye at the dozen or so reporters waiting to board the press bus, then shook his head sadly. "I checked around," he said. "But the others are hopeless—so I guess you're it."

"Wonderful," I said. "Let's do it."

We had a fine time. I enjoyed it—which put me a bit off balance, because I'd figured Nixon didn't know any more about football than he did about ending the war in Vietnam. He had made a lot of allusions to football, on the stump, but it had never occurred to me that he actually *knew* anything more about football than he knew about the Grateful Dead.

But I was wrong. Whatever else might be said about Nixon—and there is still no doubt in my mind that he could pass for Human—he is a goddamn stone fanatic on every facet of pro football. At one point in our conversation, when I was feeling a bit pressed for leverage, I mentioned a down & out pass—in the waning moments of a Super Bowl mismatch between Green Bay and Oakland—to an obscure, second-string Oakland receiver named Bill Miller that had stuck in my mind because of its pinpoint style & precision.

He hesitated for a moment, lost in thought, then he whacked me on the thigh and laughed: "That's right, by God! The Miami boy!"

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That was four years ago. LBJ was

day.

When Nixon went into New Hampshire, he was viewed, by the pros, as just another of these stubborn, right-wing waterheads with nothing better to do. The polls showed him comfortably ahead of George Romney, but according to most of the big-time press wizards who were hanging around Manchester at the time, the Nixon-Romney race was only a drill that would end just as soon as Nelson Rockefeller came in to mop up both of them. The bar at the Wayfarer Motor Inn was a sort of unofficial press headquarters, where the press people hovered in nervous anticipation of the Rockefeller announcement that was said to be coming "at any moment."

So I was not entirely overcome at the invitation to spend an hour alone with Richard Nixon. He was, after all, a born loser—even if he somehow managed to get the Republican nomination I figured he didn't have a sick goat's chance of beating Lyndon Johnson.

I was as guilty as all the others, that year, of treating the McCarthy campaign as a foredoomed exercise in noble futility. We had talked about it a lot—not only in the Wayfarer bar, but also in the bar of the Holiday Inn where Nixon was staying—and the press consensus was that the only Republican with a chance to beat Johnson was Nelson Rockefeller . . . and the only other possible winner was Bobby Kennedy, but of course he had already dropped out.

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I was remembering all this as I cranked the big green Cougar along U.S. 93 once again, four years later, to cover another one of those flakey New Hampshire primaries. The electorate in this state is notoriously perverse and unpredictable. In 1964, for instance, it was a thumping victory in the New Hampshire primary that got the Henry Cabot Lodge steamroller off to a roaring start . . . and in '68, Gene McCarthy woke up on the morning of election day to read in the newspapers that the last minute polls were nearly unanimous in giving him between six and eight percent of the vote . . . and even McCarthy was stunned, I think, to wake up 24 hours later and find himself with 42 percent.

Strange Country & a Hitchhiker

Strange country up here; New Hampshire and Vermont appear to be the East's psychic answer to Colorado and New Mexico—big lonely hills laced with back roads and old houses where people live almost aggressively by themselves. The insularity of the old-timers, nursing their privacy along with their harsh right-wing politics, is oddly similar and even receptive to the insularity of the newcomers, the young dropouts and former left-wing activists—people like Andy Kopkind and Ray Mungo, co-founder of the Liberation News Service—who've been moving into these hills in ever increasing numbers since the end of the Sixties. The hitchhikers you find along these narrow twisting highways look exactly like the people you see on the roads around Boulder or Aspen or Taos.

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The girl riding with me tonight is looking for an old boyfriend who moved out of Boston and is now living, she says, in a chicken coop in a sort of informal commune near Greenville, N.H. It is five or six degrees above zero outside and she doesn't even have a blanket, much less a sleeping bag, but this doesn't worry her. "I guess it sounds crazy," she explains. "We don't even sleep together. He's just a friend. But I'm happy when I'm with him because he makes me like myself."

Jesus, I thought. We've raised a generation of stone desperate cripples. She is 22, a journalism grad from Boston University, and now—six months out of college—she talks so lonely and confused that she is eagerly looking forward to spending a few nights in a frozen chicken coop with some poor bastard who doesn't even know she's coming.

The importance of Liking Yourself is a notion that fell heavily out of favor during the coptic, anti-ego frenzy of the Acid Era—but nobody guessed, back then, that the experiment might churn up this kind of hangover: a whole subculture of frightened illiterates with no faith in anything.

The girl was not interested in whatever reasons I might have for going up to Manchester to spend a few days with the McGovern campaign. She had no plans to vote in *any* election, for President or anything else.

She tried to be polite, but it was obvious after two or three minutes of noise that she didn't know what the fuck I was talking about, and cared less. It was boring; just another queer hustle in a world full of bummers that will swarm you every time if you don't keep moving.

Like her ex-boyfriend. At first he was only stoned all the time, but now he was shooting smack and acting very crazy. He would call and say he was on his way over, then not show up for three days—and then he'd be out of his head, screaming at her, not making any sense.

It was too much, she said. She loved him, but he seemed to be drifting away. We stopped at a donut shop in Marlboro and I saw she was crying, which made me feel like a monster because I'd been saying some fairly hard things about "junkies" and "loonies" and "doom-freaks."

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Once they let you get away with running around for ten years like a king hoodlum, you tend to forget now and then that about half the people you meet live from one day to the next in a state of such fear and uncertainty that about half the time they honestly doubt their own sanity.

These are not the kind of people who really need to get hung up in depressing political trips. They are not ready for it. Their boats are rocking so badly that

all they want to do is get level for long enough to think straight and avoid the next nightmare.

This girl I was delivering up to the chicken coop was one of those people. She was terrified of almost everything, including me, and this made me very uncomfortable.

We couldn't find the commune. The directions were too vague: "Go far to the dim yellow light, then right at the big tree . . . proceed to the fork and then slow to the place where the road shines. . . ."

After two hours of this I was half crazy. We had been back and forth across the same grid of backroads two or three times, with no luck . . . but finally we found it, a very peaceful-looking place on a cold hill in the woods. She went inside the main building for a while, then came back out to tell me everything was OK.

I shrugged, feeling a little sad because I could tell by the general vibrations that things were not really "OK." I was tempted to take her into Manchester with me, but I knew that would only compound the problem for both of us . . . checking into the Wayfarer at 3:30, then up again at seven for a quick breakfast and then into the press bus for a long day of watching McGovern shake hands with people at factory gates.

Could she handle that madness? Probably not. And even if she could, why do it? A political campaign is a very narrow ritual, where anything weird is unwelcome. I am trouble enough by myself; they would never tolerate me if I showed up with a nervous blonde nymphet who thought politics was some kind of game played by old people, like bridge.

No, it would never do. But on my way into Manchester, driving like a werewolf, it never occurred to me that maybe I was not quite as sane as I'd always thought I was. There is something seriously bent, when you think on it, in the notion that a man with good sense would race out of his peaceful home and fly off in a frenzy like some kind of electrified turkey buzzard to spend three or four days being carried around the foulest sections of New England like a piece of meat, to watch another man, who says he wants to be President, embarrassing a lot of people by making them shake his hand outside factory gates at sunrise.

At Holy Cross

Earlier that night, in Cambridge—over dinner at a bogus Mexican restaurant run by Italian junkies—several people had asked me why I was wasting my time on "this kind of bullshit." McGovern, Muskie, Lindsay, or even Gene McCarthy. I had just come back from a long day at the Massachusetts "Rad/Lib Caucus" in Worcester, billed as a statewide rally to decide which Democratic candidate to support in the Massachusetts primary on April 25th.

The idea, said the organizers, was to unify and avoid a disastrous vote-splitting orgy that would splinter the Left between McGovern, Lindsay & McCarthy—thus guaranteeing an easy Muskie win. The Caucus organizers were said to be well-known McCarthy supporters, who'd conceived the gathering as a sort of launching pad for Gene in '72 . . . and McCarthy seemed to agree; he was the only candidate to attend the Caucus in person, and his appearance drew a long, standing ovation that gave every indication of a pending victory.

The night before, at a crowded student rally in Hogan Student Center at Holy Cross, McCarthy had responded to a questioner who asked if he was "really a serious candidate" by saying: "You'll see how serious I am after tomorrow's caucus."

The crowd at Holy Cross responded with a rolling cheer. The median age, that night, was somewhere around 19—and McCarthy was impressively sharp and confident as he drew roar after roar of applause with his quietly vicious attack on Nixon, Humphrey and Muskie. As I stood there in the doorway of the auditorium, looking across the shoulders of the overflow crowd, it looked like 1968 all over again. There was a definite sense of drama in seeing McCarthy back on the stump, cranking up another crusade.

But that high didn't last long. The site of Saturday's Caucus was the gym at Assumption College, across town, and the crowd over there was very different. The median age at the Caucus was more like 33 and the results of the first ballot were a staggering blow to McCarthy's newborn crusade.

McGovern cleaned up, beating McCarthy by almost 3 to 1. When the final tally came in, after more than eight hours of in-fighting, McGovern's quietly efficient grass-roots organizers had locked up 62 percent of the vote—leaving McCarthy to split the rest, more or less equally, with Shirley Chisholm. Both Muskie and Lindsay had tried to ignore the Caucus, claiming it was "stacked" against them, and as a result neither one of them got enough votes to even mention.

The outcome of the Mass. Rad/Lib Caucus was a shock to almost everybody except the busloads of McGovern supporters who had come there to flex their muscle in public for the first time. McCarthy—who had left early to fly back to Washington for an appearance the next day on *Meet the Press*—was seriously jolted by the loss. He showed it the next morning, on TV, when he looked like a ball of bad nerves in a crossfire of hostile questions from Roger Mudd and George Herman. He was clearly off-balance; a nervous shadow of the rising tide, hammerhead spoiler he had been on Friday night for the rally at Holy Cross.

To make things worse, one of the main organizers of the Rad/Lib Caucus was Jerry Grossman, a wealthy envelope manufacturer from Newton, in the Boston suburbs, and a key McCarthy fund-raiser in the '68 campaign . . . but after the Rad/Lib Caucus, Grossman went far out of his way, along with Mudd & Herman, to make sure McCarthy was done for.

He immediately endorsed McGovern, saying it was clear that "Massachusetts liberals no longer believe in McCarthy's leadership quotient." What this meant, according to the unanimous translation by political pros and press wizards, was, "McCarthy won't get any more of Grossman's money."

Grossman ignored the obvious fact that he and other pro-McCarthy heavies had been beaten stupid, on the grass-roots organizing level, by an un-heralded "McGovern machine" put together in Massachusetts by John Reuther—a nephew of Walter, late president of the UAW. I spent most of that afternoon wandering around the gym, listening to people talk and watching the action, and it was absolutely clear—once the voting started—that Reuther had everything wired.

Everywhere I went there was a local McGovern floor manager keeping people in line, telling them exactly what was happening and what would probably happen next . . . while the McCarthy forces—led by veteran Kennedy Camelot field marshal Richard Goodwin—became more and more demoralized, caught in a fast-rising pincers movement between a surprisingly-organized McGovern block on their Right, and a wild-eyed Chisholm uprising on the Left.

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The Chisholm strength shocked everybody. She was one of 12 names on the ballot—which included almost every conceivable Democratic candidate from Hubert Humphrey to Patsy Mink, Wilbur Mills and Sam Yorty—but after Muskie and Lindsay dropped out, the Caucus was billed far and wide as a test between McGovern and McCarthy. There was no mention in the press or anywhere else that some unknown black woman from Brooklyn might seriously challenge these famous liberal heavies on their own turf . . . but when the final vote came in, Shirley Chisholm had actually beaten Gene McCarthy, who finished a close third.

The Chisholm challenge was a last-minute idea and only half-organized, on the morning of the caucus, by a handful of sweetly young black politicians and Women's Lib types—but by 6:00 that evening it had developed from a noisy idea to a solid power block. What began as a symbolic kind of challenge became a serious position after the first ballot—among this overwhelmingly white, liberal, affluent, well-educated and over-30 audience—when almost half of them refused to vote for George McGovern because he seemed "too conventional," as one long-haired kid in a ski parka told me.

They had nothing against McGovern; they agreed with almost everything he said—but they wanted more; and it is interesting to speculate about what might have happened if the same people who showed up at McCarthy's Holy Cross rally on Friday night had come out to Assumption on Saturday.

There were not many Youth/Freak vote types at the Rad/Lib Caucus; per-

haps one out of five, and probably not even that. The bulk of the crowd looked like professors and their wives from Amherst. One of the problems, according to a bushy young radical-talking non-student from Boston, was that you had to pay a "registration fee" of \$2 before you got a vote.

"Shit," he said. "I wouldn't pay it, myself, so I can't vote." He shrugged. "But this caucus doesn't mean anything, anyway. This is just a bunch of old liberals getting their rocks off."

Harold Hughes Is Your Friend

Manchester, New Hampshire, is a broken down mill town on the Merrimack River with an aggressive Chamber of Commerce and America's worst newspaper. There is not much else to say for it, except that Manchester is a welcome change from Washington, D.C.

I checked into the Wayfarer, just before dawn, and tried to get some music



George McGovern

on my high-powered waterproof Sony, but there was nothing worth listening to. Not even out of Boston or Cambridge. So I slept a few hours and then joined the McGovern caravan for a tour of the Booth Fisheries, in Portsmouth.

It was a wonderful experience. We stood near the time clock as the shifts changed & McGovern did his hand-grabbing thing. There was no way to avoid him, so the workers shuffled by and tried to be polite. McGovern was blocking the approach to the drinking fountain, above which hung a sign saying "Dip Hands in Hand Solution Before Returning to Work."

The place was like a big aircraft hangar full of fish, with a strange cold gaseous haze hanging over everything—and a lot of hissing & humming from the fish-packing machines on the assembly line. I have always liked seafood, but after 30 minutes in that place I lost my appetite for it.

The next drill was the official opening of the new McGovern headquarters in Dover, where a large-crowd of teenagers and middle-aged liberals were gathered to meet the candidate. This age pattern seemed to prevail at every one of McGovern's public appearances: the crowds were always a mix of people either under 20 or over 40. The meaning of this age diversion didn't hit me until I looked back on my notes and saw how

consistent it was . . . even at the Mass. Rad/Lib Caucus, where I guessed the median age to be 33, that figure was a rough mathematical compromise, rather than a physical description. In both Massachusetts and New Hampshire, the McGovern/McCarthy crowds were noticeably barren of people between 25 and 35.

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After Dover, the next speech was scheduled for the main auditorium at the Exeter Academy for Boys, an exclusive prep school about 25 miles up the road. The schedule showed a two-hour break for dinner at the Exeter Inn, where the McGovern press party took over about half the dining room.

I can't recommend the food at that place, because they wouldn't let me eat. The only other person barred from the dining room that night was Tim Crouse, from the ROLLING STONE bureau in Boston. Neither one of us was acceptably dressed, they said—no ties, no three-button herringbone jackets—so we had to wait in the bar with James J. Kilpatrick, the famous neo-nazi newspaper columnist. He made no attempt to sit with us, but he made sure that everybody in the room knew exactly who he was. He kept calling the bartender "Jim," which was not his name, and the bartender, becoming more & more nervous, began addressing Kilpatrick as "Mr. Reynolds."

Finally Kilpatrick lost his temper. "My name's not Reynolds, goddamnit! I'm James J. Kilpatrick of the Washington Evening Star." Then he hauled his paunch off the chair and reeled out to the lobby.

The Exeter stop was not a happy one for McGovern, because word had just come in from Frank Mankiewicz, his campaign manager in Washington, that McGovern's old friend and staunch liberal ally from Iowa—Senator Harold Hughes—had just announced that he was endorsing Ed Muskie.

This news hit the campaign caravan like a dung-bomb. Hughes had been one of the few Senators that McGovern was counting on to hang tough. The Hughes-McGovern-Fred Harris (D-Okla.) axis has been the closest thing in the Senate to a Populist power bloc for the past two years. Even the Muskie endorsement-hustlers who've been criss-crossing the nation putting pressure on local politicians to come out for Big Ed hadn't bothered with Hughes, because they considered him "un-touchable." If anything, he was thought to be more radical and intransigent than McGovern himself.

Hughes had grown a beard; he didn't mind admitting that he talked to trees now and then—and a few months earlier he had challenged the party hierarchy by forcing a public showdown between himself and Larry O'Brien's personal choice for the chairmanship of the all-important Credentials Committee at the national convention.

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Dick Dougherty, a former LATimes newsman who is handling McGovern's national press action, was so shaken by the news of Hughes' defection that he didn't even try to explain it when reporters began asking Why? Dougherty had just got the word when the crowded press limo left Dover for Exeter, and he did his best to fend off our questions until he could talk to the candidate and agree on what to say. But in terms of campaign morale, it was as if somebody had slashed all the tires on every car in the caravan, including the candidate's. When we got to the Exeter Inn I half-expected to see a filthy bearded raven perched over the entrance, croaking "Nevermore . . ."

By chance, I found George downstairs in the Men's Room, hovering into a urinal and staring straight ahead at the grey marble tiles.

"Say . . . ah . . . I hate to mention this," I said. "But what about this thing with Hughes?"

He flinched and quickly zipped his pants up, shaking his head and mumbling something about "a deal for the vice-presidency." I could see that he didn't want to talk about it, but I wanted to get his reaction before he and Dougherty could put a story together.

"Why do you think he did it?" I said. He was washing his hands, staring down at the sink. "Well . . ." he said finally. "I guess I shouldn't say this, Hunter, but I honestly don't know. I'm surprised; we're all surprised."

—Continued on Next Page

Fear and Loathing in New Hampshire

by Hunter S. Thompson

—Continued from Preceding Page—

He looked very tired, and I didn't see much point in prodding him to say anything else about what was clearly a painful subject. We walked upstairs together, but I stopped at the desk to get a newspaper while he went into the dining room. This proved to be my un-doing because the doorkeeper would no doubt have welcomed me very politely if I'd entered with The Senator . . . but as it happened, I was shunted off to the bar with Crouse & James J. Kilpatrick, who was wearing a vest & a blue pin-stripe suit.

The Nigger Vote

A lot has been written about McGovern's difficulties on the campaign trail, but most of it is far off the point. The career pols and press wizards say he simply lacks "charisma," but that's a cheap & simplistic idea that is more an insult to the electorate than to McGovern. The assholes who run politics in this country have become so mesmerized by the Madison Avenue school of campaigning that they actually believe, now, that all it takes to become a Congressman or a Senator—or even a President—is a nice set of teeth, a big wad of money and a half-dozen Media Specialists.

McGovern, they say, doesn't make it on this level. Which is probably true. But McCarthy was worse. His '68 campaign had none of the surface necessities. He had no money, no press, no endorsements, no camera-presence . . . his only asset was a good eye for the opening, and a good enough ear to pick up the distant rumble of a groundswell with nobody riding it.

There is nothing in McGovern's campaign, so far, to suggest that he understands this kind of thing. For all his integrity, he is still talking to the Politics of the Past. He is still naive enough to assume that anybody who is honest & intelligent—with a good voting record on "the issues"—is a natural man for the White House.

But this is stone bullshit. There are only two ways to make it in big time politics today: One is to come on like a mean dinosaur, with a high-powered machine that scares the shit out of your entrenched opposition (like Daley or Nixon) . . . and the other is to tap the massive, frustrated energies of a mainly young, disillusioned electorate that has long since abandoned the idea that we all have a duty to vote. This is like being told you have a duty to buy a new car, but you have to choose immediately between a Ford and a Chevy.

McGovern's failure to understand this is what brought people like Lindsay and McCarthy and Shirley Chisholm into the campaign. They all sense an untouched constituency. Chisholm's campaign manager, a sleek young pol from Kansas named Jerry Robinson, calls it the "Sleeping Giant vote."

"Nobody's reaching them," he said. "We got a lot of people out there with nobody they think they can vote for."

Ron Dellums, the Black Congressman from Berkeley, calls it "the Nigger vote." But he wasn't talking about skin pigment.

"It's time for somebody to lead all of America's Niggers," he said at the Capitol Hill press conference when Shirley Chisholm announced she was running for President. "And by this I mean the Young, the Black, the Brown, the Women, the Poor—all the people who feel left out of the political process. If we can put the Nigger Vote together, we can bring about some real change in this country."

Dellums is probably the only elected official in America who feels politically free enough to stare at the cameras and make a straight-faced pitch to the "Nigger Vote." But he is also enough of a politician to know it's out there . . . maybe not in the Exeter Inn, but the hills north & west of Manchester are teeming with Niggers. They didn't come for the speech-making, and they probably won't vote in the primary—but they are there, and there are a hell of a lot of them.

Looking back on that week in New Hampshire, it was mainly a matter of following George McGovern around and

watching him do his thing—which was pleasant, or at least vaguely uplifting, but not what you'd call a real jerk-around.

McGovern is not one of your classic fireballs on the stump. His campaign workers in New Hampshire seem vaguely afflicted by a sense of uncertainty about what it all means. They are very decent people. They are working hard, they are very sincere, and most of them are young volunteers who get their pay in Room & Board . . . but they lack something crucial, and that lack is painfully obvious to anybody who remembers the mood of the McCarthy volunteers in 1968.

Those people were angry. The other side of that "Clean for Gene" coin was a nervous sense of *truce* that hung over the New Hampshire campaign—because in backroom latenight talks at the Wayfarer there was no shortage of McCarthy staffers who said this would probably be their final trip "within the system." There were some who didn't mind admitting that, personally, they'd rather throw firebombs or get heavy into dope—but they were attracted by the drama, the sheer balls, of McCarthy's "hopeless challenge."

McCarthy's national press man, at the time, was Seymour Hersh, who quit the campaign in Wisconsin and called Gene a closet racist. Two years later, Sy Hersh was back in the public ear with a story about a place called My Lai, in South Vietnam. He was the one who dragged it out in the open.

McCarthy's state-level press man that year was a hair-freak named Bill Gallagher, who kept his room in the Wayfarer open from midnight to dawn as a sort of all-night refuge for weed fanciers. A year later, when I returned to New Hampshire to write a piece on Jean-Claude Killy, I got off the ski circuit long enough to locate Gallagher in a small Vermont hamlet where he was living as the de facto head of a mini-commune. He had dropped out of politics with a vengeance; his beard was down to his belt and his head was far out of politics. "The McCarthy thing" had been "a bad trip," he explained. He no longer cared who was president.

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You don't find people like Hersh and Gallagher around McGovern's headquarters in Manchester this year. They would frighten the staff. McGovern's main man in New Hampshire is a fat young pol named Joe Granmaison, whose personal style hovers somewhere between that of a state trooper and a used car salesman.

Granmaison was eager to nail Muskie: "If we elect a president who three years ago said, 'Gee, I made a mistake' . . . well, I think it's about time these people were held accountable for those mistakes."

Indeed. But Granmaison backed away from me like he'd stepped on a rattlesnake when I asked him if it were true that he'd been a Johnson delegate to the Chicago convention in '68.

We met at a McGovern cocktail party in a downstate hamlet called Keene. "Let's talk about this word 'accountable,'" I said. I got the feeling you stepped in shit on that one . . .

"What do you mean?" he snapped. "Just because I was a Johnson delegate doesn't mean anything. I'm not running for office."

"Good," I said. We were standing in a short hallway between the kitchen and the living room, where McGovern was saying, "The thing the political bosses want most is for young people to drop out . . . because they know the young people can change the system, and the bosses don't want any change."

True enough, I thought. But how do you "change the system" by hiring a young foley like Granmaison to wire up your act in New Hampshire? With a veteran Judas Goat like that in charge of the operation, it's no wonder that McGovern's Manchester headquarters is full of people who talk like nervous PoliSci students on job-leave.

Joe didn't feel like discussing his gig at the '68 Convention. Which is understandable. If I had done a thing like that, I wouldn't want to talk about it, either. I tried to change the subject, but he crammed a handful of potato chips into his mouth and walked away.

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Later that night, after the cocktail party, we drove out to the Student Union hall at Keene State College, where Mc-

Govern addressed a big and genuinely friendly crowd of almost 3000, jammed into a hall meant for 2000, tops. The advance man had done his work well.

The big question, tonight, was "Amnesty," and when McGovern said he was for it, the crowd came alive. This was, after all, the first time any active candidate for the presidency had said "Yes" on the Amnesty question—which is beginning to look like a time-bomb with almost as much Spoiler Potential as the "busing issue."

They both have long and tangled roots, but it is hard to imagine any question in American politics today that could have more long-range impact than the argument over "amnesty," which is nothing more or less than a proposal to grant Presidential pardon to all Draft Dodgers and US Military deserters, on the grounds that history had absolved them. Because if the Vietnam War was *wrong* from the start—as even Nixon has tacitly admitted—then it is hard to avoid the logic of the argument that says the Anti-War Exiles were *Right*, for refusing to fight it.

There is not much room for politics in the Amnesty argument. It boils down to an official admission that the American Military Establishment, acting in spiritual concert with the White House and the national Business Community—was *Wrong*.

Almost everybody except Joe Alsop has already admitted this, in private . . . but it is going to be a very painful thing to say in public.

It will be especially painful to the people who got their sons shipped back to them in rubber sacks, and to the thousands of young Vets who got their arms and their legs and balls blown off for what the White House and Ed Muskie now admit was "a mistake."

But 60,000 Americans have died for that "mistake," along with several million Vietnamese . . . and it is only now becoming clear that the "war dead" will also include hundreds of thousands of Cambodians, Laotians and Thais. When this war goes into the history books, the United States Air Force will rank as the most efficient gang of murderers in the history of man.

Richard Nixon is flatly opposed to a general amnesty for the men who refused to fight this tragic war. Muskie agrees, but he says he might change his mind once the war ends . . . and Lindsay, as usual, is both for and against it.

The only "candidates" in favor of Amnesty are McGovern and Ted Kennedy. I watched McGovern deal with the question when it popped out of an overflow student audience at Keene State. He was talking very sharp, very confidential, and when the question of Amnesty came up, he got right on it, saying "Yes, I'm in favor . . ."

This provoked a nice outburst of cheers and applause. It was a very strong statement, and the students clearly dug it.

Then, months later, somebody tossed out the fishhook—asking McGovern if he had any plans, pro or con, about supporting Muskie, if Big Ed got the nod in Miami.

McGovern paused, shifted uneasily for a second or so at the podium, then said: "Yes, I'm inclined to that position." I was standing behind him on the steps, looking out at the crowd through a slit in the big velvet curtain, and according to the red-inked speed scrawl in my notebook the audience responded with . . . "No cheering, confused silence, the audience seems to sag . . ."

But these were only my notes. Perhaps I was wrong—but even making a certain allowance for my own bias, it still seems perfectly logical to assume that an audience of first-time voters might be at least momentarily confused by a Left/Champion Democratic candidate who says in one breath that his opponent is dead wrong on a very crucial issue . . . and then in the next breath says he plans to support that opponent if he wins the nomination.

I doubt if I was the only person in the hall, at that moment, who thought: "Well, shit . . . if you plan to support him in July, why not support him now, and get it over with?"

Moments later, the speech ended and I found myself out on the sidewalk shooting up with Ray Morgan, a veteran political analyst from the Kansas City Star. He was on his way to the airport, with McGovern, for a quick flight on the charter plane to Washington, and he urged me to join him.

But I didn't feel up to it. I felt like thinking for a while, running that narrow, icy, little highway back to Man-

chester just as fast as the Cougar would make it and still hold the road—which was not very fast, so I had plenty of time to think, and to wonder why I felt so depressed.

Enter, The Shadow

I had not come to New Hampshire with any illusions about McGovern or his trip—which was, after all, a long-shot underdog challenge that even the people running his campaign said was not much better than 30 to 1.

What depressed me, I think, was that McGovern was the only alternative available, this time around, and I was sorry I couldn't get up for it. I agreed with everything he said, but I wish he would say a lot more—or maybe something different.

Ideas? Specifics? Programs? Etc.?

Well . . . that would take a lot of time and space I don't have now, but for openers I think maybe it is no longer enough to have been "against the War in Vietnam since 1963"—especially when your name is not one of the two Senators who voted against the Gulf of Tonkin resolution in 1964 and when you're talking to people who got their first taste of tear gas at anti-war rallies in places like Berkeley and Cambridge in early '65.

A lot of blood has gone under the bridge since then, and we have all learned a hell of a lot about the realities of Politics in America. Even the politicians have learned—but, as usual, the politicians are usually much slower than the people they want to lead.

This is an ugly portent for the 25 million or so new voters between 18 and 25 who may or may not vote in 1972. And many of them probably will vote. The ones who go to the polls in '72 will be the most committed, the most idealistic, the "best minds of my generation," as Ginsberg said it 14 years ago in "Howl." There is not much doubt that the hustlers behind the "Youth Vote" will get a lot of people out to the polls in '72. If you give 25 million people a new toy, the odds are pretty good that a lot of them will try it at least once.

But what about next time? Who is going to explain, in 1976, that all the people who felt they got burned in '72 should "try again" for another bogus challenger? Four years from now there will be two entire generations—between the ages of 22 and 40—who will not give a hoot in hell about any election, and their apathy will be rooted in personal experience. Four years from now it will be very difficult to convince anybody who has gone from Johnson-Goldwater to Humphrey-Nixon to Nixon-Muskie that there is any possible reason for getting involved in another bullshit election.

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This is the gibberish that churned in my head on the drive back from Manchester. Every now and then I would pass a car with New Hampshire plates and the motto "Live Free or Die" inscribed above the numbers.

The highways are full of good motives. But T. S. Eliot put them all in a sack when he coughed up that line about . . . what was it? Have these dangerous drugs fucked my memory? Maybe so. But I think it went something like this:

"Between the Idea and the Reality . . . Falls the Shadow."

The Shadow? I could almost *smell* the bastard behind me when I made the last turn into Manchester. It was late Tuesday night, and tomorrow's schedule was calm. All the candidates had zipped off to Florida—except for Sam Yorty, and I didn't feel ready for that.

The next day, around noon, I drove down to Boston. The only hitch-hiker I saw was an 18-year-old kid with long black hair who was going to Reading—or "Redding," as he said it—but when I asked him who he planned to vote for in November he looked at me like I'd said something crazy.

"What election?" he asked.

"Never mind," I said. "I was only kidding."

One of the favorite parlor games in Left/Liberal circles from Beverly Hills to Chevy Chase to the Upper East Side and Cambridge has been—for more than a year, now—a sort of guilty, half-public breast-beating whenever George McGovern's name is mentioned. He has become the Willy Loman of the Left; he is liked, but not well-liked, and his failure to

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Fear and Loathing in New Hampshire

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make the big charismatic breakthrough has made him the despair of his friends. They can't figure it out.

A few weeks ago I drove over to Chevy Chase—to the "White side" of Rock Creek Park—to have dinner with McGovern and a few of his heavier friends. The idea was to have a small, loose-talking dinner and let George relax after a week on the stump in New Hampshire. He arrived looking tired and depressed. Somebody handed him a drink and he slumped down on the couch, not saying much but listening intently as the talk quickly turned to "the McGovern problem."

For more than a year now, he's been saying all the right things. He has been publicly opposed to the war in Vietnam since 1963; he's for amnesty now; his alternative military spending budget would cut Pentagon money back to less than half of what Nixon proposes for 1972. Beyond that, McGovern has had the balls to go into Florida and say that if he gets elected he will probably pull the plug on the \$5,000,000,000 Space Shuttle program, thereby croaking thousands of new jobs in the depressed Cape Kennedy/Central Florida area.

He has refused to modify his stand on the school busing issue, which Nixon-Wallace strategists say will be the number one campaign argument by midsummer—one of those wild-eyed fire and brimstone issues that scares the piss out of politicians because there is no way to dodge it . . . but McGovern went out of his way to make sure people understood he was for busing. Not because it's desirable, but it's "among the prices we are paying for a century of segregation in our housing patterns."

This is not the kind of thing people want to hear in a general election year—especially not if you happen to be an unemployed anti-gravity systems engineer with a deadhead mortgage on a house near Orlando . . . or a Polish millworker in Milwaukee with three kids the government wants to haul across town every morning to a school full of Niggers.

McGovern is the only major candidate—including Lindsay and Muskie—who invariably gives a straight answer when people raise these questions. He lines out the painful truth, and his reward has been just about the same as that of any other politician who insists on telling the truth: He is mocked, vilified, ignored, and abandoned as a hopeless loser by even his good old buddies like Harold Hughes.

On the face of it, the "McGovern problem" looks like the ultimate proof-positive for the liberal cynics' conviction that there is no room in American politics for an honest man. Which is probably true: if you take it for granted—along with McGovern and most of his backers—that "American politics" is synonymous with the traditional Two Party system: The Democrats and the Republicans, the Ins and the Outs, the Party in Power and The Loyal Opposition.

That's the term National Democratic party chairman Larry O'Brien has decided to go with, this year—and he says he can't for the life of him understand why Demo party headquarters from coast to coast aren't bursting at the seams with dewy-eyed young voters completely stoned on the latest Party Message.

Message to O'Brien

MESSAGE TO O'BRIEN (via Mojo Wire)—Well, Larry . . . I really hate to lay this on you . . . because we used to be buddies, right? That was back in the days when I bought all those white shark-skin suits because I thought I was going to be the next Governor of American Samoa. You strung me along, Larry; you conned me into buying all those goddam white suits and kept me hanging around that Holiday Inn in Pierre, South Dakota, waiting for my confirmation to come through . . . but it never did, Larry; I was never appointed. You bushwhacked me.

But what the hell? I've never been one to hold a grudge any longer than absolutely necessary . . . and I wouldn't want you to think I'd hold that kind of cheap treachery against you, now that you're running the party: The Loyal Opposition, as it were. . . .

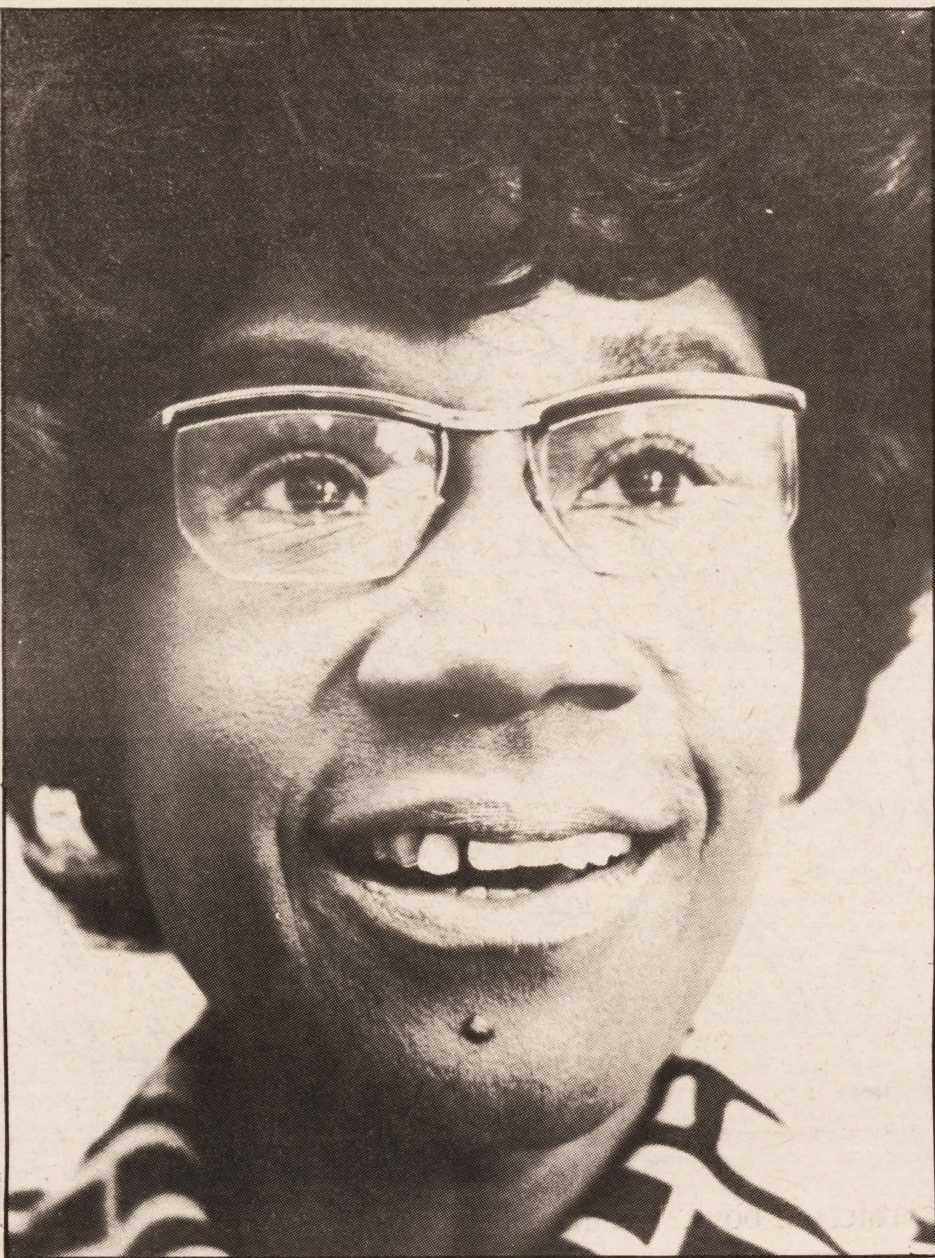
You and Hubert, along with Muskie

and Jackson. And Mad Sam Yorty, and Wilbur Mills—and, yes, even Lindsay and McGovern. Party loyalty is the name of the game, right? George Meany, Frank Rizzo, Mayor Daley. . . .

Well, shucks. What can I say, Larry? I'm still for that gig in Samoa; or anywhere else where the sun shines. . . . because I still have those stinking white

this, because I like McGovern—which still surprises me, because politicians, like journalists, are pretty hard people to like. The only other group I've ever dealt with who struck me as being essentially meaner than politicians are Tight Ends in pro football.

There is not much difference in basic temperament between a good tight end



Shirley Chisholm

suits, and I'm beginning to think seriously in terms of foreign travel around the end of this year. Maybe November. . . .

Under different circumstances, Larry, I might try to press you on this: maybe lean on you just a trifle for an appointment to the Drugs & Politics desk at our outpost in the Canary Islands. My friend Cardoza, the retired Dean of Gonzo Journalism, just bought a bar out there and he says it's a very weird place.

But shit, Larry; why kid ourselves? You're not going to be in a position to appoint anybody to anything when November comes down on us. You won't even have a job; or if you do it'll be one of those gigs where you'll have to get your half-salary in gold bullion. . . . because the way it looks now, the Democratic party won't be issuing a hell of a lot of certified checks after November 7.

Remember the Whigs, Larry? They went belly up, with no warning at all, when a handful of young politicians like Abe Lincoln decided to move out on their own, and fuck the Whigs . . . which worked out very nicely, and when it became almost instantly clear that the Whig hierarchy was just a gang of old impotent windbags with no real power at all, the Party just curled up and died . . . and any politician stupid enough to "stay loyal" went down with the ship.

Beware of Tight Ends

This is the soft underbelly of the "McGovern problem." He is really just another good Democrat, and the only thing that sets him apart from the others is a hard, almost masochistic kind of honesty that drives him around the country, running up huge bills and turning people off.

We are not a nation of truth-lovers. McGovern understands this, but he keeps on saying these terrible things anyway . . . and after watching him in New Hampshire for a while I found myself wondering—to a point that bordered now and then on quiet anguish—just what the hell it was about the man that left me politically numb, despite the fact that I agreed with everything he said.

I spent about two weeks brooding on

and a successful politician. They will both go down in the pit and do whatever has to be done—then come up smiling. Gene "Big Daddy" Lipscomb was not a tight end, but he had the same instincts. The Baltimore Colts paid Gene to mash quarterbacks—and, failing that, to crack collarbones and make people deaf.

Shortly before he Oded on smack, Big Daddy explained his technique to a lunchtime crowd of Rotarians. "I always go straight for the head," he explained. "Whoever's across from me, I bash him with the flat part of my hand—nail him square on the ear-hole of his helmet about five straight times. Pretty soon he gets so nervous he can't concentrate. He can't even hear the signals. Once I get him spooked, the rest is easy."

There is a powerful fascination that attaches to this kind of efficiency—and it is worth remembering that John Kennedy won the 1960 Democratic nomination not by appealing to the higher and finer consciousness of the delegates, but by laying the stomp and the whipsong on Adlai Stevenson's people when the deal went down in Los Angeles. The "Kennedy machine" was so good that even Mayor Daley came around. A good politician can smell the hammer coming down like an old sailor smells a squall behind the sun.

But Daley is not acting, this year, like a man who smells the hammer. When George McGovern went to pay a "courtesy call" on Daley last month, the Mayor's advice was, "Go out and win an election—then come back and see me."

McGovern and his earnest liberal advisors don't like to talk about that visit; no more than Muskie and his people enjoy talking about Big Ed's "courtesy call" on Supercop Frank Rizzo, the new Mayor of Philadelphia.

But these are the men with the muscle; they can swing a lot of votes. Or at least that's what the Conventional Wisdom says. Daley, Rizzo, George Meany; the good ole boys, the kingmakers.

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And there is the flaw in McGovern. When the big whistle blows, he's still a Party Man. Ten years ago the electorate saw nothing wrong with the spectacle of

two men fighting savagely for the Party nomination—calling each other "whores" and "traitors" and "thieves" all the way up to balloting time at the convention—and then miraculously Coming Together, letting bygones be bygones, to confront the common foe: The Other Party.

But the electorate has different tastes now, and that kind of honky-tonk bullshit doesn't make it any more. Back in 1960 most Americans still believed that whoever lived in the White House was naturally a righteous and upstanding man. Otherwise he wouldn't be there. . . .

This was after 28 years of Roosevelt and Eisenhower, who were very close to God. Harry Truman, who had lived a little closer to the Devil, was viewed more as an accident than a Real President.

The shittrain began on November 22nd, 1963, in Dallas—when some twisted little geek blew the President's head off . . . and then a year later, LJB was re-elected as the "Peace Candidate."

Johnson did a lot of rotten things in those five bloody years, but when the history books are written he will emerge in his proper role as the man who caused an entire generation of Americans to lose all respect for the Presidency, the White House, the Army and in fact the whole structure of "government."

And then came '68, the year that somehow managed to confirm almost everybody's worst fears about the future of the Republic . . . and then, to wrap it all up another cheapjack hustler moved into the White House. If Joe McGinnis had written *The Selling of the President* about good old Ike, he'd have been chased through the streets of New York by angry mobs. But when he wrote it about Nixon, people just shrugged and said, "Yeah, it's a goddamn shame, even if it's true, but so what?"

The First Super Bummer

I went to Nixon's Inauguration. Washington was a sea of mud and freezing rain. As the Inaugural Parade neared the corner of 16th and Pennsylvania Ave., some freak threw a half-gallon wine jug at the convertible carrying the commandant of the Marine Corps . . . and as one-time Presidential candidate George Romney passed by in his new role as Secretary of Health, Education and Welfare, the mob on the sidewalk began chanting "Romney eats shit! Romney eats shit!"

George tried to ignore it. He knew the TV cameras were on him, so he curled his mouth up in a hideous smile and kept waving at the crowd—even as they continued to chant "Romney eats shit!"

The mood of the crowd was decidedly ugly. You couldn't walk 50 feet without blundering into a fistfight. The high point of the parade, of course, was the moment when the new President's car passed by.

But it was hard to be sure which one it was. The Secret Service ran a few decoys down the line, from time to time, apparently to confuse the snipers and maybe draw some fire . . . but nothing serious happened: Just the normal hail of rocks, beer cans and wine bottles . . . so they figured it was safe to run the President through.

Nixon came by—according to the TV men—in what appeared to be a sort of huge, hollowed-out cannonball on wheels. It was a very nasty looking armored car, and God only knows who was actually inside it.

I was standing next to a CBS-TV reporter named Joe Benti and I heard him say, "Here comes the President. . . ." "How do you know?" I asked him. It was just barely possible to detect a hint of human movement through the slits that passed for windows.

"The President is waving to the crowd," said Benti into his mike.

"Bullshit!" said Lennox Raphael standing beside me. "That's Neal Cassidy in there."

"Who?" said Benti.

"Never mind," I said. "He can't hear you anyway. That car has a vacuum seal."

Benti stared at me, then moved away. Shortly afterward, he quit his job and took his family to Copenhagen.

When the Great Scorer comes to list the main downers of our time, the Nixon Inauguration will have to be ranked Number One. Altamont was a nightmare, Chicago was worse, Kent State was so bad that it's still hard to find the right words for it . . . but there was at least a brief flash of hope in those scenes, before the shroud came down.

The Nixon Inauguration is the only public spectacle I've ever dealt with that

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was a king-hell bummer from start to finish. There was a stench of bedrock finality about it. Standing there on Pennsylvania Ave., watching our New President roll by in his black/armored hearse, surrounded by a trotting phalanx of Secret Service men with their hands in the air, batting away the garbage thrown out of the crowd. I found myself wondering how Lee felt at Appomattox . . . or the main Jap admiral when they took him out to the battleship Missouri to sign the final papers.

More Equal Pigs

Well . . . it's almost dawn now, and the only thing keeping me sane is the knowledge that just as soon as I finish this gibberish I can zoom off to Florida. I have a credit card that says I can run totally amok, on the tab, at the Colony Hotel in Palm Beach.

Right. Check into the penthouse and have the Tailor send up a gallon of rum and ten yards of the best Irish silk. I need a tailor-made free-falling suit, just in case they invite me down to Caracas for the races. Charge it to Clifford Irving . . . and while you're at it, my man, send up a pair of white alligator-neck shoes, and an Arab to polish the windows.

I mean to cover this Florida primary in depth. New Hampshire was . . . well . . . what was it? On the plane back from Boston I scanned the New York Times and found that James Reston, as always, had his teeth right down on the bone.

"After all," he wrote, "there are hard and honest differences between the candidates and the parties over the best terms of peace and trade, and the allocation of limited resources to the competing claims of military security abroad and civil order and social security at home. This is really what the presidential campaign is all about."

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Reston is narrow, but he has a good eye, when it's focused, and in this case he seems to be right. The '72 presidential campaign is looking more & more like a backroom squabble between Bankers, Generals, and Labor Bosses. There is no indication, at this time, that the outcome will make much difference to anyone else. If the Republicans win, we will immediately declare Limited Nuclear War on all of Indochina and the IRS will start collecting a 20 percent national sales tax on every dollar spent by anybody, for anything—for the National Defense Emergency.

But if the Democrats win we will immediately declare Massive Conventional War on all of Indochina and the IRS will begin collecting a 20 percent National Losers' Tax on all incomes under \$10,000 per annum — for the National Defense Emergency.

Getting It On in D.C.

The most recent Gallup Poll says Nixon & Muskie are running Head to Head, but on closer examination the figures had Muskie trailing by a bare one percent — so he quickly resigned his membership in the "Caucasians Only" Congressional Country Club in the horse suburbs near Cabin John, Maryland. He made this painful move in late January, about the same time he began hammering Nixon's "end the war" proposal.

Watching Muskie on TV that week, I remembered the words of ex-Senator Ernest Gruening (D-Alaska) when he appeared at the Massachusetts Rad-Lib Caucus in his role as the official spokesman for McGovern. Gruening was one of the two Senators who voted against the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution in 1964 — the resolution that gave LBJ carte blanche to do Everything Necessary to win the war in Vietnam. (Wayne Morse of Oregon was the only other "nay" vote: . . . and both Gruening & Morse were defeated when they ran for reelection in 1966.)

In Worcester, Ernest Gruening approached the stage like a slow-moving golem. He is 85 years old, and his legs are not real springy—but when he got behind the podium he spoke like the Grim Reaper.

"I've known Ed Muskie for many

years," he said. "I've considered him a friend . . . but I can't help remembering that, for all those years, while we were getting deeper and deeper into that war, and while more and more boys were dying . . . Ed Muskie stayed silent."

Gruening neglected to say where McGovern had been on the day of the Tonkin Gulf vote . . . but I remember somebody saying, up on the press platform near the roof of the Assumption College gym, that "I can forgive McGovern for blowing that Tonkin thing, because the Pentagon lied—but what's his excuse for not voting against that goddamn wire-tapping bill?" (*The Omnibus Safe Streets & Crime Control Act of 1968*), a genuinely oppressive piece of legislation . . . even Lyndon Johnson was shocked by it, but he couldn't quite bring himself to veto the bugger—for the same reasons cited by the many Senators who called the bill "frightening" while refusing to vote against it because they didn't want to be on record as having voted against "safe streets and crime control." (*The bare handful of Senators who actually voted against the bill explained themselves in very ominous terms. For details, see 'Justice' by Richard Harris.*)

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I had thought about this, but I had also thought about all the other aspects of this puzzling and depressing campaign—which seemed, a few months ago, to have enough weird and open-ended possibilities that I actually moved from Colorado to Washington for the purpose of "covering the campaign." It struck me as a right thing to do, at the time—especially in the wake of the success we'd had with two back-to-back Freak Power runs at the heavily entrenched Money/Politics/Yahoo establishment in Aspen.

But things are different in Washington. It's not that everybody you talk to is aggressively hostile to any idea that might faze their well-ordered lifestyles; they'd just rather not think about it. And there is no sense of life in the Underculture. On the national/reality spectrum, Washington's Doper/Left/Rock/Radical community is somewhere between Toledo and Biloxi. "Getting it on" in Washington means killing a pint of Four Roses and then arguing about Foreign Aid, over chicken wings, with somebody's drunken Congressman.

The latest craze on the local high-life front is mixing up six or eight aspirins in a fresh Coca-Cola and doing it all at once. Far more government people are into this stuff than will ever admit to it. What seems like mass paranoia, in Washington, is really just a sprawling, hyper-tense boredom—and the people who actually live and thrive here, in the great web of Government, are the first ones to tell you, on the basis of long experience, that the name or even the Party Affiliation of the next President won't make any difference at all, except on the surface.

The leaves change, they say, but the roots stay the same. So just lie back and live with it. To crank up a noisy bad stance out in a place like San Francisco and start yelling about "getting things done in Washington" is like sitting far back in the end zone seats at the Super Bowl and screaming at the Miami linebackers "Stop Duane Thomas!"

Dope Saves the Cowboys

That is one aspect of the '72 Super Bowl that nobody has properly dealt with: What was it like for those humorless, god-fearing Alger-bent Jesus Freaks to go out on that field in front of 100,000 people in New Orleans and get beaten like gongs by the only certified dope freak in the NFL? Thomas ran through the Dolphins like a mule through corn-stalks.

It was a fine thing to see; and it was no real surprise when the Texas cops busted him, two weeks later, for Possession of Marijuana . . . and the Dallas coach said Yes, he'd just as soon trade Duane Thomas for almost anybody.

They don't get along. Tom Landry, the Cowboys' coach, never misses a chance to get up on the platform with Billy Graham whenever The Crusade plays in Dallas. Duane Thomas calls Landry a "plastic man." He tells reporters that the team's general manager, Tex Schram, is "sick, demented and vicious." Thomas played his whole season, last year, without ever uttering a sentence to anyone on the team: Not

the coach, the quarterback, his blockers—nobody; dead silence.

All he did was take the ball and run every time they called his number—which came to be more and more often, and in the Super Bowl Thomas was the whole show. But the season is now over; the purse is safe in the vault; and Duane Thomas is facing two to 20 for possession.

Nobody really expects him to serve time, but nobody seems to think he'll be playing for Dallas next year, either . . . and a few sporting people who claim to know how the NFL works say he won't be playing for anybody next year; that the Commissioner is outraged at this mockery of all those Government-sponsored "Beware of Dope" TV shots that dressed up the screen last autumn.

We all enjoyed those spots, but not everyone found them convincing. Here was a White House directive saying several million dollars would be spent to drill dozens of Name Players to stare at the camera and try to stop grinding their teeth long enough to say they hate drugs of any kind . . . and then the best running back in the world turns out to be a goddamn uncontrollable drug-sucker.

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But not for long. There is not much room for freaks in the National Football League. Joe Namath was saved by the simple blind luck of getting drafted by a team in New York City, a place where social outlaws are not always viewed as criminals. But Namath would have had a very different trip if he'd been drafted by the St. Louis Cardinals.

The Five W's

Which is neither here nor there, for right now. We seem to have wandered out on another tangent. But why not? Every now and then you have to get away from that ugly, Old Politics trip, or it will drive you kicking the walls and hurling AR 3s into the fireplace.

This world is full of downers, but where is the word to describe the feeling you get when you come back tired and crazy from a week on the road to find 28 fat newspapers on the desk: Seven Washington Posts, seven Washington Stars, seven New York Times, six Wall Street Journals and one Suck . . . to be read, marked, clipped, filed, correlated . . . and then chopped, burned, mashed and finally hurled out in the street to freak the neighbors.

After two or three weeks of this madness, you begin to feel As One with the man who said "No news is good news." In 28 papers, only the rarest kind of luck will turn up more than two or three articles of any interest . . . but even then the interest items are usually buried deep around paragraph 16 on the Jump (or "Cont. on . . .") page. . . .

The Post will have a story about Muskie making a speech in Iowa. The Star will say the same thing, and the Journal will say nothing at all. But the Times might have enough room on the jump page to include a line or so that says something like: "When he finished his speech, Muskie burst into tears and seized his campaign manager by the side of the neck. They grappled briefly, but the struggle was kicked apart by an oriental woman who seemed to be in control."

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Now that's good journalism. Totally objective; very active and straight to the point. But we need to know more. Who was that woman? Why did they fight? Where was Muskie taken. What was he saying when the microphone broke?

Jesus, what's the other one? Every journalist in America knows the "Five W's." But I can only remember four. "Who, What, Why, Where." . . . and, yes, of course; . . . "When!"

But what the hell? An item like that tends to pinch the interest gland, so you figure it's time to move out. Pack up the \$419 Abercrombie & Fitch elephant-skin suitcase; send the phones and the scanner and the tape viewers by Separate Float, load everything into the weightless Magnesium Kitbag . . . then call for a high-speed cab to the airport; load on and zip off to wherever The Word says it's happening.

The public expects no less. They want a man who can zap around the nation like a goddamn methedrine bat: Racing from airport to airport, from one crisis to another—sucking up the news and then spewing it out by the "Five W's" in a package that makes perfect sense.

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Why not? With the truth so dull and depressing, the only working alternative is wild bursts of madness and filigree. Or fly off and writing nothing at all; get a room on the edge of Chicago and shoot up for about 16 straight days—then wander back to Washington with a notebook full of finely-honed insights on "The Mood of the Midwest."

Be warned. The word among wizards is that Muskie will have the Democratic nomination locked up when the votes are counted in Wisconsin . . . and never mind the fact that only 12 percent of the potential voters will go to the polls in that state. (The Arizona polls—using bullhorns, billboards and fleets of roving Voter Buses—managed to drag out 13 or 14 percent.)

This ugly truth is beginning to dawn on the big-time Demos. They commandeered a whole network the other night for a TV broadside called "The Loyal Opposition" — featuring Larry O'Brien and all the top managers, discussing The Party's prospects for 1972.

It was a terrible bummer. Even though I am paid to watch this kind of atavistic swill, I could barely keep a fix on it. It was like watching a gaggle of Woolworth stockholders, bitching about all the trouble they were having getting the company to hire an executive-level Jew.

Whatever O'Brien and his people had in mind, it didn't come across. They looked and talked like a bunch of surly, burned-out Republicans—still wondering why Hubert Humphrey didn't make it in '68 with his Politics of Joy.

Jesus, what a shock it was! The Hube always seemed like a natural. But something went wrong. . . . What was it?

The Democrats don't seem to know; or if they do they don't want to talk about it. They had a big fund-raising dinner for "the candidates" the other night at a ballroom in downtown Washington, but people who went said it sucked. No candidates showed up—except Humphrey, and he couldn't stay for dinner. Gene McCarthy was introduced, but he didn't feel like talking. Ted Kennedy stayed for dinner, but nobody mentioned his name . . . and when the party broke up, before midnight, the chairman was still looking for somebody who could say something meaningful. But nobody seemed to be ready—or none of the regulars, at least, and when it comes to party affairs, the regulars are the ones who do the talking.

People who went to the party—at \$500 a head—said the crowd got strangely restive, toward the end of the evening, when it finally became apparent that nobody was going to say anything.

It was very unsettling, they said—like going to a pep rally with no cheerleaders.

One report said Ted Kennedy "just sat there, looking very uncomfortable."

And so it goes. One of my last political acts, in Colorado, was to check in at the Pitkin County courthouse and change my registration from Democrat to Independent. Under Colorado law, I can vote in either primary, but I doubt if I'll find the time—and it's hard to say, right now, just what kind of mood I might be in on November 7th.

Meanwhile, I am hunkered down in Washington—waiting for the next plane to anywhere and wondering what in the name of sweet Jesus ever brought me here in the first place. This is not what us journalists call a "happy beat."

At first I thought it was me; that I was missing all the action because I wasn't plugged in. But then I began reading the press wizards who are plugged in, and it didn't take long to figure out that most of them were just filling space because their contracts said they had to write a certain amount of words every week.

At that point I tried talking to some of the people that even the wizards said were "right on top of things." But they all seemed very depressed; not only about the '72 election, but about the whole, long-range future of politics and democracy in America.

Which is not exactly the kind of question we really need to come to grips with right now. The nut of the problem is that covering this presidential campaign is so fucking dull that it's just barely tolerable . . . and the only thing worse than going out on the campaign trail and getting hauled around in a booze-frenzy from one speech to another is having to come back to Washington and write about it.